

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 MCT-01
SY-05 HA-05 ACDA-12 ITC-01 TRSE-00 EB-08 LAB-04
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R 092150Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8406
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMQXBASSY PANAMA 3449
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ
USDOC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 2955

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB PINT SHUM ASEC ES
SUBJ: EAGLE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE, WIFE AND INSTRUCTOR DEPART
EL SALVADOR UNDER KIDNAP THREAT

REF: (AL SAN SALVADOR A-07, (B) 77 SAN SALVADOR 5234, (C)
SAN SALVADOR 2916

1. SUMMARY: UNDER THE SHADOW OF A KIDNAP THREAT DETECTED
AND COMMUNICATED BY EMBASSY OFFICERS, AND REPORTEDLY ON INSTRUC-
TIONS FROM HIS U.S. HEADQUARTERS, MR JOHN VANDERBERG, ACTING
GENERAL MANAGER OF EAGLE INTERNATIONAL, DEPARTED EL SALVADOR
WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1978, ENROUTE TO HIS HOME BASE IN
WISCONSIN. VANDERBERG WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE AND BILL
RATZBURG, THE FIRM'S ONLY OTHER U.S. EXPATRIATE EMPLOYEES IN
COUNTRY. BEFORE DEPARTING VANDERBERG STATED DEFINITELY THAT
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EAGLE INTERNATIONAL, A WHOLLY OWNED SUBSIDIARY OF ZWICKER
KNITTING MILLS, CURRENTLY OPERATING IN THE ZONA FRANCA WITH 528
EMPLOYEES, WOULD BE SHUTDOWN EFFECTIVE WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 1978.
BASED ON ADMITTEDLY SKETCHY INTELLIGENCE EMBASSY SPECULATES THAT
IN VIEW OF EAGLE INTERNATIONAL'S TROUBLE PLAGUED HISTORY AND
RESULTING CURRENT PRECARIOUS STATUS, TERRORISTS PROBABLY REASON
THAT KIDNAPPING OF U.S. EXPATRIATE EMPLOYEE COULD BE THE PROVERBIAL

LAST STRAW COMPELLING THE FIRM TO PULL OUT OF THE COUNTRY. SUCH A PULL-OUT WOULD PROBABLY SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE ZONA FRANCA, ONE OF THE FEW AREAS IN WHICH THE GOES CAN DEMONSTRATE CONCRETE RESULTS, HOWEVER SHORT OF POTENTIAL. IRONICALLY, IF CARRIED OUT, ALLEGED SHUTDOWN OF EAGLE INTERNATIONAL WOULD ACHIEVE MUCH OF THE TERRORISTS' PRESUMED GOAL. AS OF NOON FRIDAY, JUNE 9, EAGLE INTERNATIONAL CONTINUED TO OPERATE, VIRTUALLY ON A BUSINESS AS USUAL BASIS. QSN D SUMMARY.

2. TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 1978, COMATT AND POLITICAL/LABOR OFFICER MET TWICE WITH U.S. EMPLOYEES AND SALVADORAN LAWYERS OF EAGLE INTERNATIONAL, A WHOLLY OWNED SUBSIDIARY OF ZWICKER KNITTING MILLS OF APPLETON, WISCONSIN. UNDER SALVADORAN LAW, EAGLE INTERNATIONAL IS A NET EXPORT FIRM, UTILIZING MATERIALS IMPORTED FROM THE U.S. TO PRODUCE GLOVES WHICH ARE REEXPORTED TO THE U.S. UNDER U.S. TARIFF PROVISION 806. RECENTLY TRANSPOSED TO THE SAN BARTOLO ZONA FRANCA, THE COMPANY CURRENTLY EMPLOYS A WORK FORCE OF 528.

3. IN AFTERMATH OF TUESDAY'S MEETINGS FIRST, WITH ACTING GENERAL MANAGER OF EAGLE INTERNATIONAL, JOHN VANDERBERG, AND LATER WITH VANDERBERG, HIS WIFE AND TWO OF EAGLE INTERNATIONAL'S SALVADORAN LAWYERS, (REPORTED REFTEL C), COMATT RECEIVED CALL AT HOME AROUND 2150 HOURS FROM MARINE SECURITY GUARD. THE MARINE INDICATED THAT MR VANDERBERG HAD JUST CALLED EMBASSY STATING THAT HE HAD BEEN THREATENED BY KIDNAPPERS AND THAT HE URGENTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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NEEDED ASSISTANCE. VANDERBERG THEN ASKED THE MARINE GUARD TO CONTACT COMATT ON HIS BEHALF. MR BEBL, THE COMATT, RETURNED VANDERBERG'S CALL AT 2155 HOURS AND AFTER IDENTIFYING HIMSELF, ASKED WHAT WAS WRONG (SINCE PER REFTEL C VANDERBERG HAD INDICATED AT FIRST MEETING EARLIER THAT DAY THAT HE INTENDED TO REMAIN IN EL SALVADOR AND GAVE NO INDICATION TO THE CONTRARY AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING). VANDERBERG, OBVIOUSLY UPSET, RELATED THAT HE HAD JUST CALLED TO BRIEF HIS IMMEDIATE BOSS, RALPH NAGREEN, MANAGER OF EAGLE INTERNATIONAL, CURRENTLY IN THE STATES TO DISCUSS THE COMPANY'S SITUATION WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE PARENT COMPANY. AFTER HEARING VANDERBERG'S ACCOUNT, NAGREEN REPORTEDLY ORDERED HIM, HIS WIFE AND MR RATZBURG (AN AMCIT INSTRUCTOR) TO TAKE THE FIRST FLIGHT OUT OF SAN SALVADOR.

4. CONSEQUENTLY, VANDERBERG BOOKED HIS PARTY TO LEAVE EL SALVADOR THE FOLLOWING MORNING, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7 AT 9:30. IN A RELATED MOVE HE THEN REQUESTED THE COMATT'S ASSISTANCE IN PROVIDING HIS PARTY WITH TRANSPORTATION TO THE AIRPORT. BELL RESPONDED THAT WHILE WILLING, HE WOULD NONETHELESS HAVE TO CHECK WITH THE AMBASSADOR BEFORE COMMITTING HIMSELF.

5. SINCE AMBASSADOR DEVINE WAS ATTENDING A FAREWELL DINNER FOR A COLLEAGUE, MR BELL ASKED THE MARINE TO LEAVE A MESSAGE REQUESTING THE AMBASSADOR TO CALL HIM ON RETURNING TO THE RESIDENCE.

6. AFTER 30 MINUTES, THE COMATT CALLED VANDERBERG BACK TO REASSURE HIM THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN. VANDERBERG BY THAT TIME SEEMED MORE AT EASE. HE INDICATED THAT HE HAD JUST CALLED ONE OF THE COMPANY LAWYERS (PROBABLY SEGOVIA) AND THAT AS A RESULT HE NO LONGER NEEDED TRANSPORTATION TO THE AIRPORT (COMMENT: AS IT TURNS OUT VANDERBERG WANTED MR BELL AT THE AIRPORT BECAUSE HE DID NOT HAVE HIS PAPERS READY TO CLEAR THE COUNTRY AND PRESUMABLY WANTED AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL ON HAND TO RUN INTERFERENCE WITH SALVADORAN IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES. APPARENTLY, CONFIDENTIAL

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HIS LAWYER CONTACT REMINDED VANDERBERG THAT LIC. RICARDO CASTANEDA WOULD BE DEPARTING ON THE SAME FLIGHT AND THAT HE COULD THEREFORE PROVIDE ANY NECESSARY ASSISTANCE - END OF COMMENT).

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7. MR BELL PROCEEDED TO ASK WHAT THE IMPLICATION WAS FOR EAGLE INTERNATIONAL. AFTER A LONG PAUSE, VANDERBERG RESPONDED THAT QUOTE EFFECTIVE TOMORROW, JUNE 7, EAGLE INTERNATIONAL WOULD CLOSE DOWN UNQUOTE. HE WENT ON TO ADD THAT EAGLE INTERNATIONAL WAS FED UP WITH THE GOES, THE UNION AND THE WORKERS AND THAT NOW THE COMPANY WAS SIMPLY GOING TO SIT BACK AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED. WHEN ASKED IF HIS ABSENCE WOULD BE TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT, VANDERBERG RESPONDED THAT, CONFIDENTIALLY, HE HOPED THE MOVE WOULD BE TEMPORARY. HOWEVER, THIS DEPENDED UPON REACTION OF THE

GOES, THE WORKERS AND THE UNION. MR. BELL THEN ASKED IF DECISION TO SHUT DOWN THE PLANT HAD BEEN MADE PRIOR TO OR AFTER VANDERBERG'S CALL TO NAGREEN. VANDERBERG RESPONDED THAT APPARENTLY THE DECISION TO CLOSE DOWN HAD BEEN MADE BEFORE HIS CALL AND THAT HIS CALL SIMPLY VALIDATED THE DECISION. AS AN AFTER-CONFIDENTIAL

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THOUGH, HE ADDED THAT PERHAPS EAGLE INTERNATIONAL'S WARNINGS WOULD FINALLY BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

8. THE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION ENDED WITH VANDERBERG PROMISING TO CALL THE COMATT BEFORE DEPARTURE THE FOLLOWING MORNING.

9. THE NEXT MORNING, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, VANDERBERG CALLED AT 0900 HOURS TO SAY THAT HE WAS ABOUT TO DEPART FOR WISCONSIN ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE AND MR. RATZBURG. HE THANKED THE EMBASSY PROFUSELY FOR THE TIMELY ASSISTANCE RENDERED AND EXPRESSED REGRET OVER ANY INCONVENIENCE HE MIGHT HAVE CAUSED.

10. LATER THAT DAY TO CHECK ACCURACY OF MR. VANDERBERG'S ASSERTIONS, COMATT CALLED EAGLE INTERNATIONAL PLANT AND TALKED TO MR. LUIS CHORRO, THE SALVADORAN ACCOUNTANT THEN IN CHARGE. ACCORDING TO MR. CHORRO, HE HAD NOT TALKED WITH VANDERBERG OR ANY OF HIS PARTY PRIOR TO DEPARTURE AND CONSEQUENTLY WAS OPERATING THE PLANT ON A BUSINESS AS USUAL BASIS. SINCE VANDERBERG DID NOT COMMUNICATE WITH CHORRO PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE THE ALLEGED SHUTDOWN ORDER MUST OSTENSIBLY COME DIRECTLY FROM THE U.S., IF INDEED IT COMES AT ALL. UNFORTUNATELY, DR. SEGOVIA, THE ONLY PERSON REMAINING IN EL SALVADOR WHO MIGHT BE FULLY INFORMED HAS NOT BEEN AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT.

11. AS OF NOON FRIDAY, JUNE 9, EAGLE INTERNATIONAL CONTINUES TO OPERATE AS USUAL WITH THE EXCEPTION THAT NO OVERTIME IS BEING PERMITTED IN ORDER TO EMPTY PLANT PROMPTLY AT CLOSING TIME.

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Message Attributes

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